

# News

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FURTHER INFORMATION:  
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## Trenton Psychiatric Hospital Celebrates 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

TRENTON – Trenton Psychiatric Hospital is celebrating its 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and commemorated the occasion Friday with a ceremony honoring its rich history and evolution.

DHS Commissioner Jennifer Velez read a congratulatory letter from Governor Jon S. Corzine during the celebration, which featured patients, staff and local officials.

“Because of the former, and current, dedicated staff engaged in the continued pursuit of therapeutic programming, Trenton Psychiatric Hospital has withstood the test of time, and satisfied the fundamental tenets of its mission,” wrote Governor Corzine.

The hospital, which was the first public psychiatric hospital in the state, opened May 15, 1848 after advocate Dorothea Lynde Dix convinced the state Legislature that people with mental illness deserved a place where they could be treated with dignity and respect, Commissioner Velez noted.

“Before the hospital opened, people with mental illnesses were housed in jails and almshouses or confined to attics and cellars in private homes. The shame associated with mental illness was immeasurable -- the ill were often treated as much less than human,” said Commissioner Velez.

The hospital initially had 86 patients and grew to 4,000 in 1954. The development of major medicines and significant changes in psychiatric treatment the hospital has brought the patient census down to just over 400 patients.

“This facility and the four other state-run psychiatric hospitals still abide by the principles advocated by Miss Dix and by the sentiment of her words that, ‘Man is not made better by being degraded,’” Commissioner Velez said. “In fact, the entire blueprint for the transformation of our mental health system in New Jersey stems from the desire to help people recover and live in the least restrictive settings possible.”

The Commissioner also praised the staff for its dedication and noted that there is still a dire need to eradicate the unjust stigma that often accompanies mental illness.

The ceremony also included a performance by the patient choir and speeches by Chief Executive Officer Teresa McQuaide and Ewing Mayor Jack Ball.